

Art Tales

A Writing Contest
Inspired by Art

2015
Awards



Sally Witter



Helle Scharling-Todd



Richard Phelps



Jacqueline Cavish

CITY OF
VENTURA
PARKS, RECREATION &
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS
www.cityofventura.net

Seventh Annual

Art Tales

A Writing Contest
Inspired by Art

The City of Ventura is pleased to sponsor, in partnership with E.P. Foster Library, a creative contest for local writers. The competition invites writers to submit an original short story or poem that was inspired by one of the Municipal Art Collection works of art currently on exhibit on the second floor of the E.P. Foster Library in downtown Ventura.

In an effort to make the City’s art collection more accessible to the community, the City of Ventura joined with E.P. Foster Library to provide an exhibit space for a limited number of works, which are rotated annually. Each piece in this year’s assortment of artwork challenges the viewer to puzzle over the work’s meaning and provides an excellent opportunity for students and adults alike to exhibit their written skills while learning about viewing works of art. This contest is a call for imaginative and inventive people to examine a work of art and then write a short story or poem reflecting their unique interpretation.

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First Place: Youth Poetry



Drive along California

by Alina Reitz

*Driving on the coast
I smell the salty ocean
The wind in my hair.*

*Mountains fill the path
Trees are swaying in the wind
Beautiful sunset.*

*Jump in for a swim
My reflection in water
I'll never turn back.*

Inspired by Jaquelyn Cavish, California Aqueduct, 2000, oil on canvas

Second Place: Youth Poetry



In the Sea

by Eleanor Pickrel

In the sea, it feels like nothing matters.

When I smell the salty scent of the ocean,
I am reminded of the gritty sand
and the waves crashing onto the rocky shore.

When swimming, I am in a whole other world
in which I'm the queen.

In the sea, the bad things don't matter.

In the sea, I am free.

Inspired by Sally Miller, Incoming Sea, 2002, watercolor on paper

Third Place: Youth Poetry



Elephant's Footprint

by Vivian Gaggia

Glacier, destructive and dangerous
cruel and cold, slowly drifts
destroying everything in its path

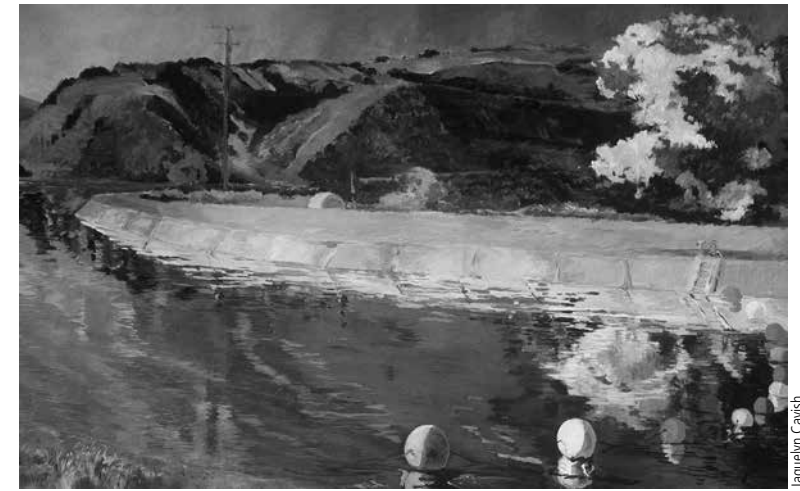
Like an elephant dancing through the jungle
He pays no attention to anything around him

Though the glacier will someday melt
and the water will rush through the forest
down to an ocean or lake

Eventually, it will freeze
and smash through the valleys once again

Inspired by Helle Scharling-Todd, Glacial Melt, 2004, laminated glass

First Place: Youth Fiction



California Aqueduct

by Juliet Ward

I sit on the shore as the tide drifts in, the buoys bobbing. The cool sand tickles my feet as I tiptoe towards the water, and a laugh slips out, echoing throughout the shore. My laugh makes me look down at the sand, and I notice that it too is laughing, the cool water tickling its smooth edges in the warm sunlight. I run forward onto the aqueduct, leaving behind footprints of the laughter the shore and I shared.

I crouch onto my stomach and watch the water bob onto the buoy before me until it feels as if the aqueduct itself is perpetually bobbing up and down. I finally break my gaze and sit up, my head spinning. I look down and see the school of fish which passes by every morning. I let my feet hang down until my toes feel the coolness of what seems like a miraculous mirror. My favorite fish, one with an orange dot right above its forehead, stares up at me with a curious look etched on his face. I copy it and stare back, concentrating.

I hear a splash and my head jerks toward the noise. I scan the sky and see a pelican, his mouth full with fresh fish. My gaze focuses back onto the fish, and he is still there, with his curious look. I look up to the sky to find the beauty of California, like a painting, and then look back to find the aqueduct, shining in the sun. California Aqueduct, I say.

Inspired by Jaquelyn Cavish, California Aqueduct, 2000, oil on canvas

Second Place: Youth Fiction



Richard Phelps

Your Last Wish

by Nadia Connelly

Deep big blue. Beautiful blue. Restless blue. Vast and smooth, like smooth shards of broken glass tossed by the sea.

"I want to go to it," she whispered, her voice echoing off the walls of the world like a thousand winds. "I want to go to it." And so she did, her eyes shining like a thousand stars as she looked upon it.

Big blue, big blue. And so she left, hair whipping, feet pounding into freshly churned sand. She never looked back. It stung like the scorpion's poison, it hurt like the claws of the cat, and it slashed like a knife at our hearts. We called to her, in vain.

Big blue, restless blue. She ran and ran with the vortex of the earth spinning in a crazed frenzy, and the moon and the sun looking upon her in despair. To big blue she went. With its contagious song it called her, as it did to others, who were now lost. Who were now forgotten.

Big blue, heartless blue. It sloshed over, singing and calling, its vast surface glimmering, willing one to stay, stay a while, and never come back. Taking the lost ones and bringing them to a place better than their own, stealing memories of the past, what could be right, what was right. She ran though, water pulling her in, grabbing her. Alas, big blue, an impatient soul, whose waves rolled in and out, had pulled too hard and she fell.

She turned, and she ran back, big blue snatching at her ankles, she ran to us. We held her tight, never wanting to let go, she smiled up at us, "I'm never going back," and we could feel it in our bones, that it was true. She spread her arms wide and swirled through the air. Her name was Avasa, and it meant freedom.

Inspired by Richard Phelps, Big Blue, 1993, acrylic on canvas

Third Place: Youth Fiction



Sally Miller

Incoming Sea

by Quinn Clow

The wind blew over my face as I smelled the salty air from the beach. I finished the last streak of my painting, I looked over at my mom's, it was magnificent, the beautiful sky had been setting over the calm sea, and the ruffles of the sand were so perfect they looked real. "Yours is amazing!" I say looking at hers with an amazed look. "Thank you, yours is good too," Mom said looking at mine with a bright smile. "Thanks" I said yawning. Mom said, "Let's go home."

Next weekend my mom and I go to the beach. The setting was just right, the waves crashing on the beautiful silky sand, the breeze was calm and settling. "Alright this a good place to set up. What do you think?" Mom asked me as she squinted to look at me but I was too dazed off in my own land where the waves crashed down on the rocks covered in sand and the sand thick and creamy, the water cold at first but a calm current on the rush for an adventure. "Honey are you ok?" my mom says in a concerned voice. "Ya I'm fine, let's set up here."

I set down my aisle, put my paint brush in place and put my paint in its holder. I kept thinking of what I was going to paint. My mom always told me to see one thing and keep it in your mind to cherish. I thought of all the times that we have had when we hiked Yosemite and got to top of mountain and painted the amazing view of the hawks soaring through the crisp air. I also thought of the time we went to my dad's funeral. There are some of the best times and some of the worst times but then it hit me, the image I would use to do my painting. A wave burst on a rock like a firework over the night sky. The rock simmering on the side of the beach.

I put my brush on the aisle closing my eyes to remember. First I painted wave smooth but sharp at the end, then I did the water under the wave smooth and gooey. Third I did the sand very thin and glossy from the water going over it. Last I did the rocks. The rocks were strong and jagged and big. Each streak is even closer to being complete. As I paint I think of my mom and how surprised she'll be and how good it will look. When I finish it is beautiful, the rocks are perfect, the water looks so real I could feel how cold, the sand is wet and glossy, and the sky looks like cotton candy so bushy and sweet. "That is beautiful" mom says as she looks at mine. "Thanks" I said. For the first time I feel like I really accomplished something and I have finally become who I want.

Inspired by Sally Miller, Incoming Sea, 2002, watercolor on paper

First Place: Teen Poetry



Cathedral

by Lindsay Emi

Over a series of years, the sea births
these things in handfuls: its white froth,
sand from worn rock, a light slick
of oil, coarse salt. My father shows me
these cliffs, and doesn't call them
a cathedral, doesn't call them sacred,
but I think I know. Some miles away,
the shore lays itself open, waits
beside one curved stretch of freeway,
a coastal city. What is important
is the softness of the water, how the light
plays upon it, gently. What is important is
how the waves crest and break
and break again and again—their infinity;
what is important is the city behind the water,
and all of its people, coming to watch.

Inspired by Sally Miller, Incoming Sea, 2002, watercolor on paper

Second Place: Teen Poetry



The Strangled Sea

by Tanner Klein

Shades of sapphire and aqua shimmer on the horizon,
Sea and sky coalesce in polarized unison,
Lively is the surface of the sea's everlasting dance,
Yet sadness permeates from the deep,
The life-giving force of the ocean fades,
Strangled by a growing enemy,
Cumulating slowly at first,
The enemy has gained strength,
Without notice, it spreads like cancer,
Leaving its mark on the shores,
Each day it lures in prey by the unsuspecting millions,
Birds and beasts of the deep alike,
Indulge in the feast of forbidden fruit,

Newborns follow the footsteps of their providers,
The web of life is tarnished,
The oceans groan,
Yet they are not heard,
For those who can hear,
Provide the enemy with its strength,
Those who can make change,
Ignore the plight of the sea,
While life fades from the deep,
Consequences are discarded,
As God looks down at the sea,
He weeps as it gasps for breath,
Humans...plastic...death.

Inspired by Richard Phelps, Big Blue, 1993, acrylic on canvas

Third Place: Teen Poetry



Never-Lasting Shore

by Autumn Detmer

Azure waters shimmer in the sunlight
surging swells heave, crash down with a rumbling.
Scrape of gravel hisses, warns of sea's might
white foam fizzing, mossy boulders crumbling.
Salty moist spray, fine mist clings to the air,
pungent seaweed upturned by waves roaring.
Crimson red crab scuttles back to its lair,
raucous cries of squabbling seagulls soaring.
Silver fish dart, escape razor-billed auks,
vibrant sea stars hunt for mussels galore.
Torrent of froth washes over the rocks,
angry and strong, forever sculpting the shore.
The tide recedes, reveals glimmering beach,
peaceful haven 'neath cliffs, kept out of reach.

Inspired by: Sally Miller, Incoming Sea, 2002, watercolor on paper

First Place: Teen Fiction



A Place for Catharsis

by Alexandria Dresbach

She stood on the edge, prompted by a need to escape or, perhaps, to find her home. Her memories were a chaotic mix of events that warmed her heart and twisted her gut, flashes of smiles, of screams. Breathing in the briny scent of the air, she knelt on the rough rocks beneath her. It was momentarily cleansing. She felt nothing. The seconds ticked by.

She scowled at the waves crashing beneath her, the salty spray hitting her face like bits of sand. She blamed those waves. For a moment, she took every sick, vile memory and threw them out to the sea like insults. She picked up a dusty rock and launched it into the sloshing water. She did this over and over and over again.

Her heart rate eventually slowed, her sudden anger now a soft smolder. Standing up, a wave of grief washed over her. Her chest felt tight, her eyes sparkled with tears. The ocean's retaliation, she thought. She sighed, drawing in the scent of home once more, and letting it go. This wasn't home. Not anymore.

Inspired by Sally Miller, Incoming Sea, 2002, watercolor on paper

Second Place: Teen Fiction



The Cove

by Kienna Kulzer

Nobody really talked about the cove. It was just kind of there, right on the other side of the forest. Sunny sky, aqua blue water, and scattered rocky islands. It seemed so out of place in the small Northwest logging town.

There was something very still about the whole place. No cars rushing past, no wind, no seagulls, just the waves going back and forth like a metronome. She could see forever, the path extending in either direction until it seemed to be swallowed by the horizon.

She pulled the paper from her pocket as she began to walk. She'd had it for months now. The blue lines were smeared in places, blending with the black ink from the pen he used. It had the look of something that had been folded and unfolded a thousand times, too many creases to count.

"I like the way you talk and walk and dress and act." He'd written her an entire letter of similar confessions, but it was that line that kept circling through her mind.

Holding the paper in her hands, she could feel it all again. The hot, dusty desert, that small town beneath those looming red rocks and that overbearing blue sky. That sky and this sea, both never-ending stretches of blue, but that one had suffocated her and this one made her feel free.

It didn't mean anything now. He loved her and she'd loved him but she couldn't love one person forever. Suffocating. Like the heat, the dusty streets, the neon signs. Like that blue sky.

"Nothing feels or looks right when you're not here."

No, it had never felt right. Just...nice. Safe. Comfortable. Something to hold on to in a small town with nothing else to do. But now one of them had escaped. She was here, by herself in this eerie cove in a new town with new people, and she'd promised herself new beginnings.

"You've always been the only one for me."

Why did he have to be so intense? She always felt guilty for not feeling more when he said things like that, but they felt empty somehow, like he could have gotten them from a movie.

"I like the way you talk and walk and dress and act." Maybe that's why she had kept it, for that line. It was the only one that felt real. The only one that she couldn't let go, because it was so sincere, so honest, and it felt like something you only get once.

She read the last words on the page. "With love, Ira." Then she folded it for the last time and tossed it into the sea.

The earth was a drum, the waves a metronome, and his words hit them right on beat. She watched the water soak through each crease and his sweet confessions turned to swirls of ink and slowly floated away.

Inspired by Sally Miller, Incoming Sea, 2002, watercolor on paper

Third Place: Teen Fiction



Big Blue

by Samuel Bova

I dream of crashing waves, palm trees swaying in the wind, high arching mountain ranges that meet the clouds, and relaxing beside a rushing stream. Then, I am flying high, rain drops crashing around me, birds chirping insistently, lightning thundering around me, and all the while I am rising up to the

clouds. I am one with nature, and my soul is enveloped in my surroundings, the rain devouring my substance. The sun is smiling down at me, bright and warm, and I am smiling right back. I look to the clouds, engulfed in the air and in complete sync with nature.

In a half second, I jolt awake, but I am not afraid. That is, until I realize it was only a dream. In reality, I am isolated, completely withdrawn and forgotten by society. I am lost in a hopeless vision, trapped in a never ending abyss of desperation. There's nobody out there who could possibly love me, nor anyone who cares whether I live a full life, or die hopelessly alone. I live in Ventura, California, homeless, and although it is an unbelievable place of opportunity and convenience, I will never find my way. I walk the streets, drowning in my own incompetence, desperate for a chance in life. But today is a new day, as is every day, and all I can do is hope. I've been fighting all my life, always in a constant struggle, no matter what the circumstance.

Two things I can use in California as an escape, as a motivation, are our great, blue ocean and the light of the nighttime stars. In the light of day, our great big blue ocean shines like nothing else, awakening even the souls of the dead to share in its beauty. In the dark of night, our ocean glistens in sync with the light of the stars, and silences the world with its peace and serenity. It drives a sense of adventure within me, inspiring and preserving my heart. It creates new worlds for all that see it, and clears the minds of those who need it. Home for many grateful creatures, our great ocean provides for all who are willing to receive it.

I have the ocean as a hope, just a hope, for my life to change forever. And I know it will come through for me. My imaginary life will become reality, and this hope instilled within me will always be a part of me. This is my oceanic dream, the desire for my life in this great big blue world.

Inspired by Richard Phelps, Big Blue, 1993, acrylic on canvas

First Place: Adult Poetry



Reaching the Shore

by Donna Prather

We watched it happen
Over days and days
The sea is gone
It rolls no more
Only folds of sand remain
Beneath what once was
Molded in the shape of frozen waves

We trudged over them and over them
And over them and over them
But far into the distance we could see
There was nothing left of the sea

We turned and faced the land
Scoured by wind, parched
Its mouth open
I threw my arms up in the air
And cried out for it
You stared at the arch in my back
With your sun bleached eyes
Before raising your own arms with a cry

The clouds darkened and rumbled
Their sleep disturbed
I cried out again
Your cry rolling in behind mine
Rolling and rolling through the air as it crackled
Split by a jagged, neon line that winked out
The land stretching its neck now

It came in a torrent
We blinked up at the sky
Then at each other and ran
Racing over melting sands
Sinking beneath our toes
That flexed and lifted us over and over
As the tide chased our heels

Reaching the shore
We dove and tumbled along wet sand
Laughing at ourselves
Two hopeful fools
Soaked with rain

Inspired by Richard Phelps, Big Blue, 1993, acrylic on canvas

Second Place: Adult Poetry



Helle Scharling-Todd

Primordial

by Joe Amaral

On the slippery ledge
of everything that was
I totter inside the derailed
boxcar of inanimate life

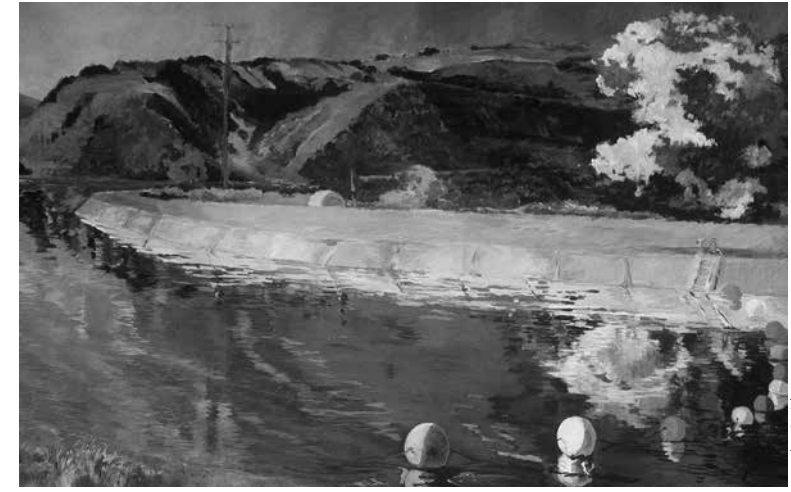
calved, watching waves lap
sea glass to the shattered shore,
a pertussis of jade shard, sand-
spit and glacial teardrop

condensed into the whirlpool abyss
of otherworldly blue as blues music
croons a climatic countdown
of stars into reflected sapphire

False light of our global dreams
melts into the dwindling, fragile
glow of environmental catastrophe-
what once was an everlasting gleam

Inspired by Helle Scharling-Todd, *Glacial Melt*, 2004, laminated glass

Tie: Third Place: Adult Poetry



Jaquelyn Cavish

Mother Nature

by Kristine Lewis

The blue flowing water brings out
the tranquility of mother nature.
Its big dry mountains accent
the narrow dead end dirt road,
with a view of balls floating
in the crystal blue water.
I feel the cold breeze,
breathing with peace and tranquility.

Inspired by Jaquelyn Cavish, *California Aqueduct*, 2000, oil on canvas

Tie: Third Place: Adult Poetry



I am the Raging Sea

by Yvonna Carnieri

I am the raging sea
Fluid, pushing, pulling
Spraying against the rocks

I am a steady rock
Spattered by the pulling pushing waves
But... unwavering

I am the sun passing on the baton
And fading
out of the sky

I am the moon grabbing the baton
Brightening
Calling up the tide

I am standing on the rock
Feeling the cold spray on my face
Wondering if I should jump..

I am heavy, I am light
Rich and poor; everything and nothing
Black and white

Invisible,
Yet exploding with colors
Impossible to conceal;

The same, but ever-changing
Ever-changing
But the same

I am the sky
I am a seagull in the sky
Stalking a fish below

I am a cool fish below,
the cool water
Unsuspecting...

I am the air I breathe
The air I breathe is me-
I am the raging sea

Inspired by Sally Miller, *Incoming Sea*, 2002, watercolor on paper

First Place: Adult Fiction



The Mosey Home

by Joseph Valderrama

We were in Mom's living room; she sat on the loveseat, I stood behind her with my hands on her shoulders. Dad's cremation urn was on the coffee table; silhouetted against the glare of beach sand framed in the picture window, "You know Mom; this reminds me of twenty years ago when I wanted to surf and Dad wanted to hike. This time he wins; we're hiking together up Topa Topa ridge for the last time."

Twenty years ago I chose to live with Mom at the beach after they divorced. What sixteen year old wouldn't want to live in the ocean, surfing. I was a waterman. Mom said I was poured from the urn of the water bearer, a true Aquarian.

Dad said I was a mountain man, like he was. But, I believed the chilled water of the Pacific flowed through my veins.

I finally agreed with Mom and on every Friday morning, the summer before my senior year of high school, Dad pulled up to our house in his old red International pickup truck named Ruby. He tapped a toot on her horn which signaled the start of our weekend together in the coastal mountains above Ventura.

We lived in the rock shelter he and his dad had built on top of Topa Topa ridge. Dad offered his best effort to teach me survival skills; he was gentle, but firm. We snared rabbits, skinned and ate rattlesnakes, and boiled native plants. I was a dutiful son.

The only tough part about trying to be a mountain man was the view. Every morning, I could see through the dusty orange of dawn, the sliver of beach where Mom's house sat. Sometimes

huge waves silently rolled from the horizon of the Pacific toward the shore. I leaned over the edge of the sheer bluff of Topa Topa and deeply inhaled. I strained to hear the rumble of white water, and longed to feel just one wisp of moist salt air on my face.

After our last day together at Topa Topa, Ruby rolled to a stop in front of Mom's house. Dad grabbed my shoulder before I did my usual escape leap, "You know son, the only difference between a mountain man and a waterman is one stands a chance of drowning. Let me know when you're ready for one more trip to Topa Topa. I'll come get you."

I picked up Dad's cremation urn from the coffee table and slipped it into my back pack. I kissed Mom's cheek. She smiled and squeezed my hand.

I pushed the backpack over to the passenger side of the bench seat and headed out. I could let go of the steering wheel and like an old horse Ruby would mosey home to Topa Topa ridge like an old pack horse.

Ruby nosed into the parking spot next to the trailhead. I cinched the straps of the backpack against my shoulders against my shoulders, "I'm here for you, Dad; one last trip to Topa Topa."

Inspired by Sally Miller, *Incoming Sea*, 2002, watercolor on paper

Second Place: Adult Fiction

1944...First Fish

by Robert McBurney

The spray from the breakers crashing on the jagged rocks misted the skinny boy's sunburned shoulders offering slight relief from the noonday sun. "Not likely," he thought of pulling a fish out of that foam. Hoisting his cork-handled rod with the battered Penn Squidder, spooled with linen line that had seen better days, he grabbed his pail and made his way north around the point.

"Wow! What a neat little cove! No waves! Even a little dock. Don't see anyone around that house up there." The boy walked to the dock, left his rod and pail, and waded to the big rock that some big mussels called home. Grabbing six of the wettest, he returned to his gear and dumped them in the pail.

He opened a mussel with the old oyster knife and got a squirt of salt water in the eye. After carefully threading the salmon-colored meat from one shell on the hook, he set the reel into free spool and cast out. He sat down, legs dangling over the gray boards, and soon felt a twitch. Slowly reeling the slack, he felt it again. Tap. Tap. The tip bowed. The boy pointed the rod to the fish then pulled up to set the hook. The fish surfaced and splashed about ten yards off.

As he towed it to him, he felt footsteps on the boards, turned and saw a khaki-clad man walking towards him carrying a gunny-sack. "Well! Bring him up, kid, so's we can see whatcha' got!"

He flopped the fish on the boards and began to remove the hook.

"Croaker," the man said. "I'll be danged! I been out here every day for weeks and nothing!



Sally Miller

You're here ten minutes and get a fourteen-incher. How old're ya, son?"

"Goin' into fifth grade."

"Put him in this sack'n hang him off that cleat so's he'll keep."

He poked each end of the cleat through the sack and lowered it into the water. The man walked back to the house shaking his head.

After several more casts without success, the boy's dad walked around from the other cove. "Ah! There you are! You were supposed to stay over there."

"I thought this'd be better, and I caught a fish here." He reached for the gunny-sack on the cleat and . . . nothing! The fish had struggled and loosened the sack enough to swim off.

"But he was there . . . a few minutes ago . . . in the sack . . . really! Honest!"

The dad shook his head and looked skeptically at the boy. "There you go . . . making up stories again. You didn't even bring a sack. C'mon. Let's go."

The boy gathered his gear, trudged after his father, and turned for one last look at the cove. One tear rolled down his cheek as he scuffled backwards keeping the cove in sight as long as he could.

Inspired by Sally Miller, Incoming Sea, 2002, watercolor on paper

Third Place: Adult Fiction

Greed and the Incoming Sea

by Deborah Killgore

It wasn't the cliffs, it was my footing on the slippery rocks that told me I was trapped.

'There is no jade left in Jade Cove,' the cashier's words echoed, his face as wrinkled and twisted as the redwoods trees outside. My feet slipped again and the phantom pain of mashing my frozen foot into another rock shot up my leg even though I couldn't tell exactly where it hurt. I shook my head. This place was confusing. The white sea spray being kicked up by the crashing waves was growing thick into a fog which filled the cove and somewhere along this rocky shoreline was the small frayed rope I had climbed down here on. I was feeling my way along the cliff face like a blind person, fingers feeling reach root to see if it was my rope, eyes pausing at each green rock. I repeated the same mantra: see the green rock, feel for slipperiness, try to cut it with a knife; Was this jade? I knew nothing about jade. Heck, I had been savoring a local beer beneath a pocket of sunshine at the Big Sur Lodge all by myself. It was all I could do to keep from feeling lonely as I eavesdropped in on the other conversations. Two men, probably locals, sat near me and droned about the construction on the bridge for a while before their conversation got interesting.

"Steve pulled a 40lb piece of jade out of the cove last week."

"At \$3000 an oz, that's gotta be close to TWO MILLION DOLLARS!" the other man exclaimed, "There's no way he could have gotten it up out of the cove."



Sally Miller

"As sure as day, nobody pulls jade up over those cliffs anymore. You've got to use a boat now," responded the first man matter-of-factly.

"I see...I see," said the other man who became suddenly silent. No doubt he was trying to think of where to get a boat.

Then they went back to talking about the bridge construction and how long the job would last. I drained my beer and went in to settle my tab. I tried to make small talk with the man behind the counter, eyeing the jade necklaces by the register.

"So this stuff is from here?" I asked pointing to the polished green rocks.

His grim face barely nodded.

"Down the road, huh?" I asked trying to be nonchalant.

"There's no Jade left in Jade Cove," the man responded coldly and thrust my change at me.

Mad with Greed, it had taken me no time to scramble down the cliff. But to my horror, every rock in the cove was green and you couldn't tell which ones were jade. Every rock had the markings of hacksaws and chisels; there were even teeth marks. The waves crashed around my feet. I had spent too much time in the cove and now the tide was rising. Yet greed rushed over me like the incoming sea.

Inspired by Sally Miller, Incoming Sea, 2002, watercolor on paper

Artist Biographies

The following four artists' work were the inspiration for this year's Art Tales. Currently on loan to the E.P. Foster Library, they are part of the City of Ventura's Municipal Art Collection normally on display at Ventura City Hall.



Jacquelyn Cavish (b. 1944)

California Aqueduct, 2000, acrylic on canvas.

"I paint from my observations of the contemporary local scene, looking for color, irony, drama, and I find it everywhere," says the artist. Originally a watercolorist, Jacquelyn Cavish became impatient with the requisite drawing preparations. She says, "I began to paint *alla prima* with acrylic on canvas. The immediacy of the process has a great appeal for me, especially in plein air painting." Her artwork has been described as having a vibrant and dynamic sense of spontaneity with a strong emphasis on color and pattern. This extraordinary gift for brilliant color and unique composition springs, she suspects, from the strong influence of Gauguin and Japanese Ukiyo-e on her work.

Jacquelyn Cavish, who earned an M.F.A. degree from UC Santa Barbara, now teaches art history and studio art classes at Oxnard College. She is also a founding member of the California Gold Coast Watercolor Society, past President of the Oxnard Art Association and is Curator of Art for the Ventura County Maritime Museum. Her work has been widely exhibited.

Artist Biographies



Sally Miller (1923-2013)

Incoming Sea, 2002, watercolor on paper.

Because of an early fascination for shape and color, Sally Miller enjoyed a lifetime of pleasure and personal achievement through painting. Miller was known for her ability to take something that is visually complex and distill it into simple, clean shapes, using economical and purposeful brushstrokes. She found painting on location in oils or watercolors exciting and challenging, capturing the subject as quickly as possible and then returning to her studio to complete the work. After many years of sailing and boating, Miller developed a strong affinity for the ocean and the natural beauty surrounding it. Her painting, *Incoming Sea*, exemplifies her tender understanding of the coastal environment.

Sally Miller was a significant member of the local art community through her support of artists and arts organizations. She was an active member of the Buena Ventura Art Association, the Santa Paula Society of the Arts, the Ventura County Artists Guild, and The Plein Aire Painters, and a signature and founding member of the California Gold Coast Watercolor Society. A popular instructor, Sally taught adult art for Ventura Unified School District for many years and in retirement gave classes in

plein aire painting. She offered demonstrations and critiques and occasionally judged for various art groups in the county. Sally's work was exhibited at the Buena Ventura Art Association Gallery, and Santa Paula Society of the Arts.



Richard Phelps (b. 1933)

Big Blue, 1993, acrylic on canvas

Richard Phelps' artistic process is patient, allowing impressions and ideas to incubate – often for years. He is stirred by the delicacies of the mood and environment around him, by the flux of nature, the power of subtle light changes, the repose or tranquility of a setting. He says, "The form an image takes on canvas is dependent upon the palette I mix, the music around me, and the first few unconscious strokes I make. The flow of the paint makes suggestions and I find myself both acting and reacting to what appears." His work evolves as an abstraction of the forces that move him. *Big Blue* is a serene work, a captured moment of light that is about to fade or move.

Artist Biographies

Born in Montpelier, Idaho, Phelps expressed an early interest in art, and, except for the years he spent in the military, has continuously painted and been active in galleries and competitions. After receiving an MA in art from San Francisco State University he promptly took a position as an art instructor at Ventura Community College. He considers his twenty-eight years of teaching art a cherished period of time, calling it a "selfish job" because he always drew such inspiration from the students.

Now retired, Richard Phelps lives in Tennessee with a view of the Smoky Mountains and a barn for a studio.



Helle Scharling-Todd (b. 1945)

Glacial Melt, 2004, laminated glass.

Instead of exhibiting her art in galleries and museums, most of Helle Scharling-Todd's creations have been permanently installed in public places throughout Europe and the United States, and, because of that, will be viewed and enjoyed by thousands of people. She says, "Public art is a duet with architecture and an inspiration for the public. I want to add a spiritual dimension to a functional place." With a focus on glass, mosaics and murals, Scharling-Todd studied art in Denmark, Germany, Italy and Mexico. She also earned a degree in art history from the university of Aarhus in Denmark. Locally, her extraordinary artwork can be found in numerous places, including the Olivas Adobe, Ventura's Urban Encore, the Ventura Avenue Adult Center, Promenade, and the Port Hueneme Library as well as part of Ventura's Westside Community Enhancement Project.

The work *Glacial Melt* expresses a unique effect created through a process Scharling-Todd developed and calls "erosion." This process of layering the glass and then selectively eroding back through the layers gives this glass piece a strange, rough and sophisticated beauty reminiscent of deep water or ice.

2015 Art Tales Curator

Public Art Project Manager Tobie Roach

As curator of this year's Art Tales display at the E.P. Foster Library, I say "thank you" to the 105 writers, aged 6 to 79 and beyond, who took up the challenge of composing poems or short fiction inspired by the four artworks I selected from the Municipal Art Collection for the library this year.

I am also very grateful to the many teachers and case managers who support creative writing in our city by encouraging their students to enter the contest.

During this year of extreme drought I selected works that "call for rain" or evoke water as the Art Tales theme.

I am thrilled so many entries lived up to Serbian poet Dejan Stojanović's inspired and profound remark that

Nothing reminds us of an awakening more than rain.

These four artworks prompted a record outpouring of poems and short fiction of real beauty and simplicity as well as of anger and deeply complex emotions reflecting upon the climate in which we as humans live today.

About the 2015 Art Tales Contest

The contest "open to writers everywhere" attracted youth, teen and adult writers who submitted 105 works of short fiction and poems inspired by four City of Ventura Municipal Art Collection works of art on loan at the E. P. Foster Library created by artists Jacquelyn Cavish, Sally Miller, Richard Phelps and Helle Scharling-Todd.

Contestants ranged in age from 6 to 79 and older from Seattle to Los Angeles and a few from the Midwest; but most entrants came from Ventura County, almost half were adults 18 years and up, 26 teenagers aged 13-17 and 30 youths 12 years or under.

We thank the many teachers who encouraged their students to enter from the Ventura Unified School District, Brooks Institute, California Poets in the Schools and other school districts as well as The ARC of Ventura County for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

We are grateful to the five contest judges for 2015:

- Sara Roberts, Deputy Director for the Ventura County Library
- Ventura County Poet Laureate Mary Kaye Rummel
- Ventura Public Art Chair Claudia Pardo
- Ventura Library Advisory Commissioner Dolly Moehrle
- Denise Sindelar, City of Ventura Community Partnerships

"It was a pleasure to read every entry," said judge Claudia Pardo. "So many good pieces," poet laureate Mary Kaye Rummel added, "I had a hard time deciding."

The City of Ventura

Municipal *Art* Collection

In May of 1999, the City Council established the Municipal Art Acquisition Program to document the history of visual art in Ventura through the annual purchase of important works of art created by area artists. The collection provides increased access to art of the highest quality and of distinctive merit through its display in the public areas of City Hall and other municipal buildings. Featured artworks must be created by artists residing in Ventura County or who have made a direct contribution to the history of art in Ventura County.

The Municipal Art Acquisition Committee, a sub-committee of the Public Art Commission, oversees the purchase of works in a variety of artistic media. The Public Art Commission plans to expand the collection in future years.

Ventura's Municipal Art Collection is exhibited in City Hall, 501 Poli Street, in the downtown Cultural District during regular business hours, closed alternate Fridays.

For more information visit
www.cityofventura.net/publicart or call 805/658-4793.

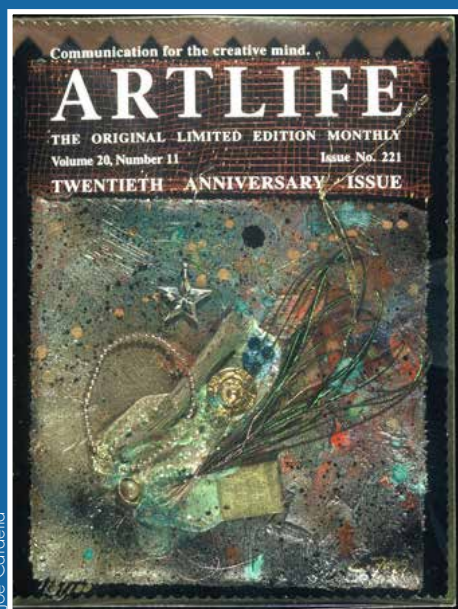


Michael Moore

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